

Report to Council

Report Title: Economic Development Update – March 2025

Prepared By: Christine Brandt, Community Development Coordinator

Department: Economic Development

Date: March 18, 2025

Report Number: ED2025-03

File Number: C11ED

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number ED2025-03 - Economic Development Update – March 2025, prepared by Christine Brandt, Community Development Coordinator for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

The Community Development Coordinator (CDC) provides regular updates to Brockton Council to inform on activities relating to community and economic development. This report specifically touches on the following:

- Local Impact of US Tariffs
- East Ridge Business Park
- Business After 5 Networking Event
- Business Improvement Grants
- Business Recognitions
- Business Retention and Expansion Program
- Saugeen Connects
- EDCO Conference
- Tourism Updates

Analysis:

Local Impact of US Tariffs

Brockton’s business community is weathering the impact of US tariffs, with some businesses more significantly affected than others. Economic development representatives from the eight municipalities in Bruce County have been working with the County’s economic development team to discuss a united response to public

concerns and develop consistent messaging. Brockton's CDC also participated in one roundtable discussion thus far with the Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO), with another date scheduled in April. Posts encouraging Brockton residents to continue to shop local and support all local businesses are being shared on social media platforms.

Community Improvement Plan

The CDC and CAO are working on updates to the existing Community Improvement Plan that will support Housing. This initiative is also part of the Housing Accelerator Fund actions and will be done in connection with the Official Plan updates and process that is under way. Community consultation will be part of this process as it advances.

East Ridge Business Park

The Municipality has fielded numerous development inquiries regarding the East Ridge Business Park in the first quarter of 2025. Additional signage projects approved for this year will be underway shortly. The existing pylon sign at the corner of Bruce Road 4 and Ontario Road will be updated this spring. The LED portion of the sign, which no longer works and cannot be repaired, will be removed to create space for additional advertisers. A request for proposals for a second sign, to be erected at the corner of Bruce Road 19 and Creighton Road, is also underway.

Business After 5 Networking Event

A business networking event that was in the works for March has been cancelled. The networking session was to be held at Larsen & Shaw to celebrate their grand re-opening following an extensive expansion and renovation. However, Larsen staff have had to turn their attention to guiding the business through the current trade barriers and will instead welcome the business community through the doors at a more opportune time. The municipality's next networking event will be held at a different location in Brockton in May or June.

Business Improvement Grants

The Municipality has received three submissions for Business Improvement Grants this year, two of which are eligible for consideration. Several other inquiries have also been made, with some businesses looking to take advantage of both municipal and county grants. Advertising for the two grant streams will continue until all funding is exhausted.

Business Recognitions

The Municipality of Brockton has recognized three new businesses this quarter:

- Dance Unlimited, Walkerton
- Titan Electrical, Walkerton
- Spek Electric, Walkerton

Future recognitions are being planned to celebrate new owners at Pizza Hut and Old Joe's Cabin, and newer businesses in Brockton including Accent Nails, the Modern Schoolhouse, and Starseed Acres.

Business Retention and Expansion Program

The CDC is working with Bruce County's economic development team in 2025 on a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Program in Brockton. The Municipality's current BR&E was completed in 2018. The purpose is to collect important data from businesses through ongoing interactions. This will help the Municipality and the County make data-driven decisions and better support our existing businesses. The program intends to understand the challenges and struggles of businesses, provide necessary business supports, inspire more people to pursue entrepreneurship, encourage small businesses to expand, and explore potential business opportunities. The goal is to interview 50 businesses in Brockton by the end of the third quarter.

Saugeen Connects

The CDC attends monthly meetings with Saugeen Connects, a partnership involving the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation and six partnering municipalities, including Brockton. The mission of Saugeen Connects is to foster economic growth, support youth retention and development, promote business growth and retention, and attract immigrants to the area as residents, workers, entrepreneurs and investors.

The group is currently focusing on the Advancing Women Economically (AWE) webinar series and the Women of Wellington Saugeen Area (WOWSA) program with its monthly networking sessions. Saugeen Connects hosted an International Women's Day event earlier this month and will next be organizing the annual Student Start Up Program (SSUP). There continues to be strong representation from Brockton residents in all programs. Brockton's CDC plays a vital role in Saugeen Connects, contributing to the development and promotion of these projects, and representing the Municipality at regional events. Brockton's own WOWSA event will be held Tuesday, March 25, 2025 from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion in Walkerton.

EDCO Conference

The CDC was able to collaborate with EDCO members at the 2025 conference, held in Toronto in February. This valuable three-day event provided an opportunity for exploring the pivotal role that economic developers play in strengthening Ontario's economy. Key messaging was delivered by industry leaders and attendees were able to engage with fellow learners from across the province.

Tourism Updates

Brockton has taken delivery of a set of new street banners, partially funded through a RED grant in 2024. These will be displayed in Walkerton's downtown core this spring. Reservations opened last week for Lobies Park Campground, which will be staffed part-time by the Community Services Department. Staff are also completing an updated rack card highlighting events in Brockton in 2025. Work on the Brockton Visitor & Community Guide is also underway, in partnership with The Walkerton Herald-Times. This guide will be printed prior to the annual Grey-Bruce brochure swap in early May.

Strategic Action Plan Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Strategic Action Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community Yes

- Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment N/A
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance Yes

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Christine Brandt, Community Development Coordinator

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer